

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
9/23/09

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Meeting Date: September 23, 2009

Called to Order: 6:03 PM

Finance Committee Members Present: Lynn Reynolds, Marje Levenson, Michael Naughton, John Hanold and Rob Allen.

Montague Selectmen Present: Pat Allen (arrived at 6:37), Mark Fairbrother and Patricia Pruitt

Others Present: Carolyn Olsen (Town Accountant)

Topics for Broader Future Discussion

- Mr. Allen suggested looking at collaborative services with other communities, especially health and senior services.
- Mr. Allen suggested focusing attention on the town website and what could be done to improve the ability of citizens to do things directly from the website rather than having to visit town hall.
- Ms. Levenson asked that before we do anything, we talk to department heads to see what they may already be doing or planning and to get their input on any ideas.
- Mr. Naughton stated that it seems that sharing services is a pretty big project, and we won't have time to make any decisions before budget so maybe we should make this question part of budget process. We can ask departments what they are doing or would like to do, including improvements on website.
- Ms. Reynolds was on website committee and has many things she would like to add to site.
- Mr. Allen noted that if we want to improve website, we need to think about how much of an investment we are willing to make.
- Mr. Hanold will fold these items into future agendas.
- Mr. Allen suggested asking Mr. Abbondanzio what he would like us to focus on.

Minutes

BOS Moved: To approve the minutes of September 16, 2009.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

FC Moved: To approve the minutes of September 16, 2009.

Vote: 5 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Gill-Montague District Meeting

- Mr. Hanold suggested offering a motion for District Meeting to reduce GMRSD budget to what we've extrapolated based on Montague's voted appropriation for their assessment.
- Mr. Naughton offered to make the motion for amendment.
- Mr. Naughton's inclination is to say that number we're presenting is latest result of process we began in January to determine what the town can afford.

- Mr. Hanold will make copies of our letter to the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education available at the district meeting, as well as copies of our proposed amendment.

Single Rates versus Ranges for P/T Employees on Schedule II

Positions being discussed: P/T DPW (including WPCF), Snow Plow Drivers, P/T Police Officers, Relief ACO, P/T Inspectors, Poll Workers and P/T clerical.

- Notes from Department heads were read and are in the minutes file.
- Poll workers – Ms. Bourbeau has requested a \$10.00 hourly rate for the precinct Wardens instead of the current \$8.00 per hour, with no change for poll workers.
- Ms. Levenson requested information on what other towns pay these positions.
- Ms. Pruitt finds it premature to discuss part time rate increases before the total budget is known.
- Mr. Naughton thinks there's a more general question which is whether we should have pay ranges rather than a flat rate for specific positions. He would like to discuss this broader issue prior to discussing individual positions. Mr. Naughton noted that Parks and Recreation have counselors, supervisors and a playground director. Mr. Dobosz generally offers annual increases of 25 cents to 50 cents per hour to returning employees. We also need to be able to explain any differences in how positions are treated.
- Mr. Fairbrother agrees that this is way too early in the process to be discussing specific rates or ranges and agrees with Mr. Naughton that the issue is whether to go with flat rates or ranges. He is in favor of a range and noted that this is an issue of structure and not budget size.
- Ms. Levenson said that if we're looking at ranges and rates she'd like to have an extended discussion because she has specific questions, especially about the DPW.
- Ms. Reynolds would like to support the concept of ranges and save the actual amounts for individual budget discussions.
- Mr. Naughton stated that the first issue is one of budget structure and he also likes the idea of a range and also identifying position levels. He feels that a showing a range for Parks and Recreation is not as informative as identifying the three positions. He also noted that the DPW snow plow range may be two positions depending on driving qualifications. Mr. Naughton likes the idea of having a range, and starting out with a small range, perhaps a dollar, could be a place to start.
- Mr. Allen certainly in favor of having ranges, but doesn't think we should necessarily come up with them. They should come from department heads and we should make recommendations to both schedule II and the actual budget.
- Mr. Hanold offered a compromise approach of leaving the range for Parks and Recreation as is, proposes keeping the \$8.00 per hour rate for poll workers, recommending a separate amount for wardens, keeping the flat rate for part time inspectors, and giving a range for DPW/WPCF summer help and part time snow plow drivers.

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- Ms. Olsen suggested that when budget packages are given to departments they be instructed to include requests for the pay rates and/or ranges that will show on schedule II as part of the budget process. These items could then be discussed at the budget meetings with each department, and as part of the budget review process, both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee would make recommendations on both Schedule II and the departmental budget.
- Mr. Naughton is a little uncomfortable with just having ranges without separating each position (ie in Parks and Recreation).
- Mr. Fairbrother favors giving the departments the flexibility of a range rather than a flat rate.
- Ms. Levenson said that a neighboring town has an intern program with the Franklin County Technical School for DPW summer help starting at \$8.50/hr, and that this has not been looked at in Montague.

FC Moved: That when budget packages are given to departments the department heads be instructed to include requests for the pay rates and/or ranges that will show on schedule II as part of the budget process..

Vote: 4 In Favor 0 Opposed 1 Abstained

BOS Moved: That when budget packages are given to departments the department heads be instructed to include requests for the pay rates and/or ranges that will show on schedule II as part of the budget process..

Vote: 3 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

Specialization of Committee Members

- Mr. Allen is interested in core administration and the website.
- Education was taken off the list since it is a concern of all members.
- Mr. Hanold will do Police/Dispatch and Debt.
- Ms. Reynolds is interested in the website.
- Mr. Naughton will take Public Works and quality of life departments (senior center, libraries, park and recreation). Mr. Naughton is also interested in getting a current organization chart including weekly hours for each position.
- Ms. Olsen offered to prepare an organization chart with that information.

Upcoming Dates:

30 Sept 09 Gill-Montague District Meeting: re GMRSD Budget.
7 Oct 09 FinComm meeting 6:00 2nd Floor Meeting Room
14 Oct 09 FinComm meeting 6:00 2nd Floor Meeting Room
21 Oct 09 FinComm meeting 6:00 2nd Floor Meeting Room
28 Oct 09 FinComm meeting 6:00 2nd Floor Meeting Room

BOS adjourned at 7:23 PM

FC Adjourned at 7:36 PM.

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Respectfully Submitted,
Carolyn Olsen